

Around-the-world cruise begins

From Satyen Mohapatra

BOMBAY, Sept. 28 — Ten determined faces glistened in the bright sunshine as they sat expectantly in the small, light grey, fibreglass boat "Trishna". They, Army officers from the Corps of Engineers, are on a first-ever Indian odyssey to cruise around the world. They expect to cover this incredible distance of 50,000 km in about 18 turbulent months.

At 11.30 a.m., as scheduled the craft slowly glided away from the moorings. A large gathering of relatives, colleagues and friends lustily cheered "bon voyage" to the courageous crew.

Earlier, General A. S. Vaidya at a brief function wished the crew all the best and said that Trishna like its crew was "thirsty" for adventure and the hazards that faced the yacht and its crew were tremendous.

In his last lines, he echoed a sentiment which was not only felt by all those present but the wish of all Indians proud of this venture, "May fair winds be always with them".

The "Trishna" will cruise from Bombay to Mauritius, around the Cape of Good Hope, Saint Helena Island, Ascension Island, Barbados, Jamaica, through the Panama Canal, Galapagos Island, Tahiti, Auckland, Sydney, through Torres Strait, Djakarta, Singapore, Colombo and return back to Bombay.

Mayor, K. S. Rao, an avid sailor for the last 20 years is the skipper. He said this was his "life time ambition". His wife, however, showed concern and excitement about the venture. "I am excited on the one hand but I am feeling bad also that I will be missing him for such a long time".

Major K. Singh is an amputee. He broke his leg in a hang-gliding mishap. But he had successfully sailed earlier from Iran to Bombay and also from UK to Bombay in Trishna along with other crew members covering 13,000 km in three-and-a-half months.

Other members of the crew are: Col. T. P. S. Chowdhury, Maj. A. P. Singh, Maj. A. Bhattachary, Maj. S. N. Mathur, Capt. R. Bassi, Capt. S. Shekhar, Capt. C. Bharti and Lieut. N. Ahuja.

In the vast expanse of waves, the small yacht seemed to poise on the horizon. Her colourful flags fluttering. And then it was gone.